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ABSTRACT

A followup study of first year teachers' satisfaction with their preservice education is described. Graduates of California State University/Fresno who were engaged in their first year of teaching were asked to respond to a 21-question evaluative instrument reflecting a sampling of competencies covering their entire professional education sequence. The principals of these teachers were also asked to respond to the questionnaire in an effort to gain evaluative statements from two viewpoints. Questions were divided into three broad categories: (1) abilities in the areas of defining, preparing, and evaluating instructional objectives; (2) competencies in psychological and sociological areas; and (3) competencies in subject-specific areas. Generally, satisfaction with the entire preparatory program was indicated by both graduates and principals, with least satisfaction (but still positive) in the area of instructional objectives competencies. Importance of the evaluation outcomes to program improvement and to the evaluation process itself is discussed. (MJB)

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Measuring the Effectiveness of Preservice Teacher Education Via the Perceptions of Former Program Participants and Their Present Principals

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Introduction

One criterion of effectiveness of any teacher education program must be the quality of the graduates exiting the program. In fact, NCATE standard 5.1 is prefaced by the statement, "The ultimate criterion for judging a teacher education program is whether or not it produces competent graduates who enter the profession and perform effectively."

In the present study, two teacher inservice outcome measures were used to assess the effectiveness of the teacher education program at California State University, Fresno. First, perceptions concerning the effectiveness of the preservice experience were gathered from former program participants now in their first year of teacher. Additionally, the principals of those teachers were asked to judge the program's ability to develop teacher competence based on the observation of their teacher's present behavior in the classroom. In both cases, the same evaluative instrument parelleling program competencies, was used.

Program

The School of Education at California State University, Fresno offers teaching credentials approved by the California Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing and is accredited by NCATE. The multiple subjects credential program (the focus of this study) has a professional sequence of 27 units which includes 3 units each of introductory student teaching, psychological foundations, sociological foundations, the teaching of reading, curriculum methods, and 12 units of final student teaching. In addition to individual professors'

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requirements and evaluation procedures, each course has a set of prescribed competencies designed by the entire faculty. A competency checklist is placed in each student's file for each course in the professional sequence.

Instrumentation and Procedures

The objectives of the teacher education program are well defined by a series of competencies at each stage of the preservice training. A 21 question evaluative instrument was designed reflecting a sampling of competencies covering the entire professional sequence.

From University Placement Office records, all program graduates (123) who were completing their first year of teaching were selected for participation. Letters were sent to each of the teachers accompanied by the evaluative instrument. They were also notified that with their permission their current principal would be asked to evaluate the teacher education program based on his observation of their performance. By gathering information paralleling specific program competencies from both former program participants and those charged with supervising those participants in their teaching, the effectiveness of the professional sequence could be assessed from two perspectives.

Results

After appropraite statistical considerations, responses over the 21 questions were combined for the 76 teachers and 88 administrators returning the questionaire. A principal components analysis was performed to delineate possible response patterns rather than only analyzing 21 individual questions. With the questions originally sampled from the specific topic areas of the program, it was expected that the component analysis would reflect such areas. Three components (eigenvalues >1) emerged and were rotated to the Varimax criterion. For subsequent inspection, questions correlating $>.50$ with a component were clustered and a scale score computed for both teachers and principals on each cluster (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Each scale is presented below with individual item means and the scale means for both principals and teachers. Respondents were to utilize the following four point scale:

1. Not Observed (not used for calculation)
2. Poor
3. Satisfactory
4. Good
5. Excellent

With each question the teacher responded to the stem, "Would you describe your preservice instruction in terms of your ability to"; and the principals responded to the stem, "Would you describe the preservice instruction in terms of your teacher's ability to."

The first scale seems to indicate attention to the ability of the program to help teachers define, prepare, and evaluate instructional objectives:

Question	Teacher		Principal	
	Item Mean	Scale Mean	Item Mean	Scale Mean
To establish realistic objectives.	3.50		3.91	
To state those objectives as behaviors in the sense that growth can be evaluated through observation, testing, interview, and other procedures.	3.56		3.79	
To utilize those objectives as the basis for selection of content and learning experiences.	3.15		3.89	
To utilize evaluative techniques intelligently.	3.29		3.98	
To diagnose and plan for the correction of weaknesses as evidenced by that diagnoses.	3.19		3.93	
To organize the class and the classroom so that there is a minimum of unnecessary noise and confusion.	3.98		3.92	
		3.45		3.92

The second scale considers competencies completed in the psychological and sociological areas of the credential program:

Question	Teacher		Principal	
	Item Mean	Scale Mean	Item Mean	Scale Mean
To assess individual differences and adjust the classroom procedures and materials to meet the needs of individual children.	3.29		4.00	
To assess children's problems and translate that assessment into positive action in dealing with pupil behavior.	3.18		4.11	
To apply an understanding of the cultural background of each child as a basis for individualizing instruction.	3.58		4.02	
To assess childrens' basic needs (psychological and sociological) and adjust classroom techniques to help meet those needs.	3.66		3.95	
To accept children of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups in the classroom.	4.00		4.58	
To work with all children so that each individual understands that he or she is accepted as an individual and as an important member of the group.	3.74		4.44	
To utilize the principals of growth and development in making decisions about objectives, selection of content, and about the planning and sequencing of classroom experiences.	3.52		3.95	
		3.60		4.15

A final scale is concerned with curricular emphasis is the various subject areas:

Question	Teacher		Principal	
To organize materials and teach (evaluate each area)	Item Mean	Scale Mean	Item Mean	Scale Mean
Math	3.92		4.03	
Science	3.73		3.87	
Social Studies	3.83		4.16	
Language Arts (writing, English listening, spelling)	3.87		4.21	
Reading	3.98		3.92	
Art	3.73		3.98	
Physical Education	3.84		3.97	
		3.84		3.98

Discussion

In general, those most involved with the outcomes of the teacher education program, teachers and their principals, rated the program from satisfactory to slightly better than good in all areas. Examination of individual items as well as the composite scales indicated several areas requiring special attention.

For example, teachers rated the program as just satisfactory in helping them utilize objectives for learning outcomes (Scale 1). In fact, the entire scale concerning preparation, use, and evaluation of objectives was rated only a little better than satisfactory. Certainly, those areas can be reviewed for any existing deficiencies in efforts to improve the program. For example, a two unit course, Instructional Planning and Evaluation, has recently become part of the approved program leading to the full credential.

If there is any area in teacher education programs where the outcomes are less than obvious, it is in the educational foundations segments. In this study both teachers and principals rated the programs' ability to prepare teachers to recognize and meet individuals needs as better than satisfactory to slightly better than good. Such a response by practitioners seem noteworthy in the light of trends seeming to deemphasize psychological and sociological foundations in teacher education programs.

However, on that scale some apparent differences were noted between the teachers perception of the program and the perceptions of the principals. While no test of significance was performed, principals described the preservice program's ability to prepare teachers to accept individual differences and meet psychological and sociological needs as slightly better

than good, while teachers rated the same area somewhat less favorably. At least one explanation might be posited for such a difference. Perhaps principals saw their teachers working well in that area and attributed such to the teacher preparation program. On the other hand, while teachers recognized more than satisfaction in their training, they may not attribute their behavior to their training, or they may feel they are only doing a little better than satisfactory in meeting needs and accepting individual differences, attributing such to the preservice program.

Responses to the scale concerning preservice in individual subject areas indicate a positive regard for that segment of the program. Both teachers and principals consistently rated the program's ability to prepare teachers in the curriculum of multiple subjects as good.

Implications

To the degree that the perceptions of teachers and their principals are reflective of the effectiveness of preservice teacher education programs, several suggestions concerning such evaluation of program effectiveness are presented.

The use of items on the evaluation instrument that directly parallel program competencies can provide useful information. In the same sense that program competencies define and detail skills to be accomplished, it is essential that measurement of those skills be equally specific. Additionally, descriptors used to evaluate the preservice program should also be as detailed as possible

In this study, words such as good, satisfactory, and poor seemed too nebulous to be of great value. To insure that those evaluating the program are attaching the same meaning to descriptors, those descriptors need to be precise and convey useful information for those responsible for program modification.

This paper reports only the initial phase of the total evaluation process of the multiple subjects credential program. Using modifications suggested by this study, future efforts will consider program evaluation during the final student teaching by the preservice teacher, master teacher and university supervisor. Also evaluation of the program will be conducted with former participants and their principals having experience beyond the first year.